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April 4, 2025

The Honorable Dan P. Driscoll
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Driscoll,

We write to you with grave concern regarding recent reports that Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth ordered the United States Naval Academy to remove books from circulation in Nimitz Library that advance “gender ideology” or “discriminatory equity ideology” pursuant to the January 29, 2025 Executive Order “*Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling.*” It was also reported that 900 books were identified for potential removal¹ and that 400 books are currently being purged from the Nimitz Library.² We are interested in understanding if similar actions are occurring at West Point.

If true, this is a blatant attack on the First Amendment and a clear effort to suppress academic freedom and rigor at the United States Naval Academy. Moreover, this reported book ban—or any similar efforts that may be ongoing at the United States Military Academy—displays an alarming return to McCarthy-era censorship.

We note that the United States Military Library explicitly affirms the value that “[o]ur community and our nation is stronger through broadened access to quality information to support scholarship and research.”³ This value is in keeping with the recent testimony of Lieutenant General Tony Bauernfeind, Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy, before the Senate Armed Services’ Subcommittee on Personnel, who stated that the military service academies endeavor to teach future leaders of our diverse armed forces “*how to think, and not what to think.*”

To develop the next generation of Army officers, the United States Military Academy must remain committed to intellectual freedom by ensuring the Corps of Cadets can access, explore, and express ideas freely without restriction or interference. Any effort to censor books within the United States Military Library directly undermines the academy’s mission to develop commissioned leaders of character.

Thus, in the interests of congressional oversight and transparency, we request answers to the following questions:

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/28/us/politics/naval-academy-diversity-affirmative-action.html>

² <https://apnews.com/article/military-academies-dei-hegseth-trump-ba9731f24b4eb4bd9c02b568209f97af>

³ https://library.westpoint.edu/ld.php?content_id=48621990

1. Was the United States Military Academy directed to initiate a review and removal of books within its libraries? If so, by whom?
2. Is the United States Military Academy conducting a review of books in its libraries for potential removal?
3. If so:
 - a. What books have been identified for potential removal and how were they identified?
 - b. Have books already been removed from circulation? If so, what books have been or will be removed?

We appreciate your attention to these questions.

Sincerely,



Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



Chrissy Houlahan
Ranking Member
Military Personnel Subcommittee